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Records of the Black-banded Woodcreeper *Dendrocolaptes picumnus* in Chiapas, Mexico

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The distribution of the Black-banded Woodcreeper *Dendrocolaptes picumnus* in Mexico has been considered restricted to the Central Plateau of Chiapas (Alvarez del Toro 1980). Howell & Webb (1995) also reported it on Atlantic Slope, but information about this species in Mexico is limited. Here, we report its occurrence in three physiographic regions of Chiapas: the Northern Highlands, the Eastern Highlands and the Sierra Madre of Chiapas, based on specimens deposited in museums, and on a specimen collected on 1995. These records represent an extension in its known range in Chiapas and provide additional information to that of Howell & Webb (1995). Additionally, the species had not been collected in Mexico since 1963, and no specific information has been published for this species in Mexico since 1957.

The American Ornithologists' Union (AOU, 1998) noted the Black-banded Woodcreeper as resident in the highlands of Middle America from Chiapas south to western Panama and widely distributed in South America. The first published record of Black-banded Woodcreeper (*D. p. puncticollis*) for Mexico was a specimen collected on 22 September 1952 by Raymond A. Paynter Jr., in an area of pines, 8 km E of San Cristóbal de las Casas, Chiapas (16° 44' N, 92° 32' W), at an altitude of 2,400 m (Paynter, 1954). Two years earlier (8 April 1950) two specimens were collected at San José, 44 km ESE of Comitán, Chiapas (16° 05' N, 91° 38' W), at 1,500 m, but these records were not published.

This species was considered very rare by Miller *et al.* (1957) at 9 km SE. San Cristóbal, Chiapas, on 18 April 1954, and 44 km ESE Comitán, Chiapas on 8 April

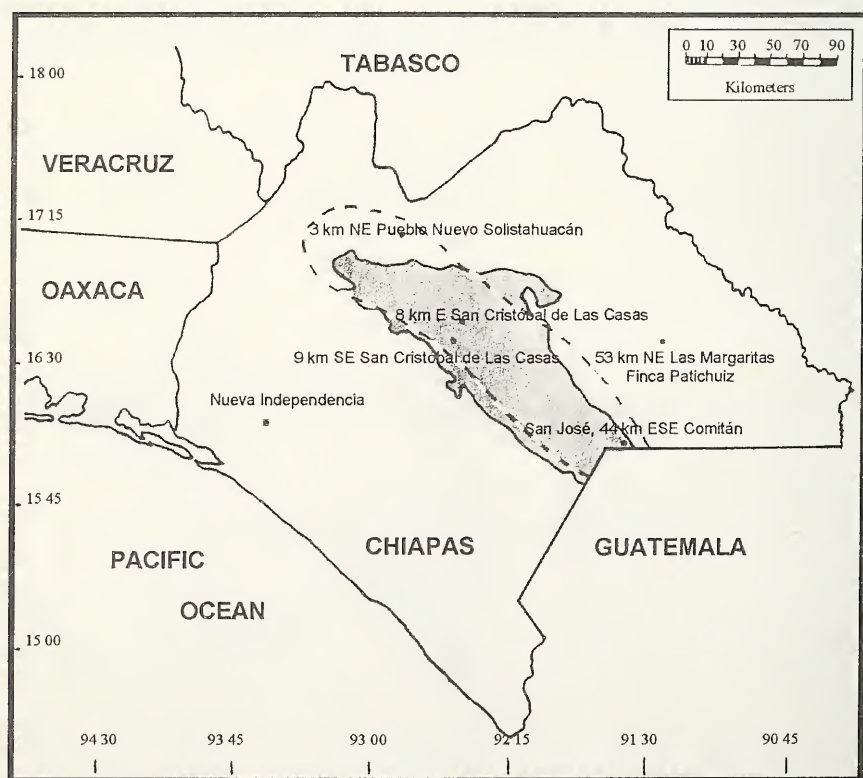


Fig. 1. Collecting sites for the Black-banded Woodcreeper *Dendrocolaptes picumnus* in Mexico with the new range extension to the Sierra Madre de Chiapas. The grey area is the central plateau of Chiapas, the former known range of this species based on Alvarez del Toro (1980). The dashed line represents the approximate range from Howell & Webb (1995).

1950. Alvarez del Toro (1980) cited it as rare in the pine forest of San Cristóbal de las Casas, Teopisca and Comitán in the Central Plateau of Chiapas. Howell & Webb (1995) reported it as uncommon to fairly common resident (1,500-3,000 m locally to 750 m in winter) on the Atlantic-Slope and in the adjacent interior from Chiapas to Honduras.

Specimens from Mexico

While reviewing ornithological information, we found 22 specimens of the Black-banded Woodcreeper in four museums of the United States: Yale Peabody Museum of Natural History, 1 specimen, 8 km E San Cristóbal de Las Casas (16° 44' N, 92° 32' W); Moore Laboratory of Zoology, 1 specimen, 3 km NE Pueblo Nuevo Solistahuacán (17° 11' N, 92° 52' W, c. 2,000 m); Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, 2 specimens from San José, 44 km ESE Comitán (16° 05' N, 91° 38' W), 1 specimen from 9 km SE San Cristóbal de Las Casas (16° 38' N, 92° 35' W, c. 2,000 m); Western Foundation of Vertebrate Zoology, 17 specimens, Finca Patichuiz, 53 km NE Las Margaritas (16° 37' N, 91° 26' W, c. 1,000 m). Another museum did not provide any information concerning 17 specimens collected. These are apparently the only museums worldwide with specimens of this species.

On 12 May 1995, we collected a specimen at Ejido Nueva Independencia, Municipio de Villaflores, Chiapas (16° 12' N, 93° 35' W), in the Biosphere Reserve "La Sepultura", in the Sierra Madre of Chiapas on the Atlantic hillside of Cerro Tres Picos in an open cloud forest. This kind of vegetation includes plant communities classified as Pine-Oak-Liquidambar Forest and Evergreen Cloud Forest (Breedlove 1981), in areas of transition. The main species of plants in this forest are: *Inga* spp., *Clethra* spp., *Pithecellobium* spp., *Ardisia* spp., and *Conastegia* spp. Open cloud forest is that whose canopy is 10 - 40 % coverage (S. A. R. H. 1994).

The specimen is an adult female (measurements in mm): Length, 292; wing-chord, 125.8; tail, 106.5; bill, 29.2; tarsus, 27; ovary 7.3 x 5.5; ovules 1.1, 1.3, 1.6 and 1.7; mass, 47 g; no fat; no moult; skull ossified; culmen grey; mandible grey; mouth grey-white. The specimen was deposited in the ornithological collection of the Instituto de Historia Natural of Chiapas, Mexico (IHN-6087).

Remarks

This record is an extension in its distributional range toward southwestern Chiapas, c. 115 km from its nearest record (9 km SE San Cristóbal de Las Casas) and represents the first specimen collected for 32 years in Mexico. The actual range for this species is thus not restricted to the Central Plateau and is known from four physiographic regions of Chiapas (Fig. 1). Although recorded in a natural protected area, there are many threats because of the agricultural activities of several communities inhabiting the reserve. Recently, the first two authors of this paper visited the area and noticed that it has suffered severe alterations. The first were caused by the cutting of some

areas of forest for the inhabitants of the reserve; the second resulted from forest fires during 1998 in the area; the third was associated with the high rainfall of September 1998, whose destructive effects left several areas of levelled ground; the fourth is the proliferation of coffee crops. The result is an area with fallen trees, without woodland undergrowth and converted into a coffee plantation. The effective conservation of suitable habitat for this bird in La Sepultura and Chiapas is essential to the species' survival. Field surveys are needed to determine the actual situation and an effective education campaign must be undertaken to combat habitat destruction.

Knowledge of the distribution and biology of many species recorded in Mexico has been increasing recently, but field work in many areas is still necessary for a better understanding of our biodiversity, and to support management plans for the reserves. In this task, museums play an important role because of the historical information they hold.

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